

# *Dry Creek Project*

## **Dry Creek Habitat Enhancement Bulletin**

Vol. 3, Winter, 2017



*Construction inspector Oscar Martin (at left, in foreground) and Construction Manager Dennis Daly (at right, in foreground) oversee the placement of logs at the entrance to a side channel on the property of the Truett Hurst Winery. The main channel of Dry Creek is visible in the background.*

## **Habitat project made big strides in 2016 to reach its goal**

Work on the Dry Creek Habitat Enhancement Project made significant progress last summer with more than a half mile of habitat enhancement features being completed. Construction crews in 2017 will take up where they left off last year as the Sonoma County Water Agency (Water Agency) continues to work toward the goal of enhancing a total of six miles of Dry Creek habitat to improve conditions for endangered coho salmon and threatened steelhead.

Two large habitat features on the Truett Hurst Winery, Meyer family, and Williamson Winery properties were completed during last summer's construction season. In 2017, construction is planned

on two additional habitat features just downstream from Truett Hurst, spanning the property of the Meyer family, Carlson Family, and Lone Star Vineyards. Habitat construction will also continue just downstream of the Westside Road Bridge on property owned by the City of Healdsburg and the DaVero Farms & Winery.

The habitat enhancement features planned for these sites include side channels, riffles, backwaters and alcoves to slow the speed of the water and create refuge for young fish. The features will be constructed using natural materials such as logs and rocks. Bank stabilization measures will prevent or reduce erosion and provide vegetation cover.



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## The building of a habitat feature: From start to finish



*The property south of the Truett Hurst Winery tasting room as it appeared prior to work commencing in the summer of 2016 on the habitat features.*



*Excavation has begun, and logs have been installed on either side of what will become the side channel. Dry Creek is to the right, outside of photo.*



*Logs, woody debris and root wads are used to stabilize banks and provide refuge areas for young fish.*



*Logs are bolted together in various locations along the side channel, which can be seen extending downstream to the Meyer property in the distance.*



*The banks are terraced and covered with erosion control material. Plants will grow through the materials and re-vegetate the banks.*



*The side channel is completed and water from Dry Creek flows into the new feature and through a series of riffles and pools.*



# Dry Creek Project

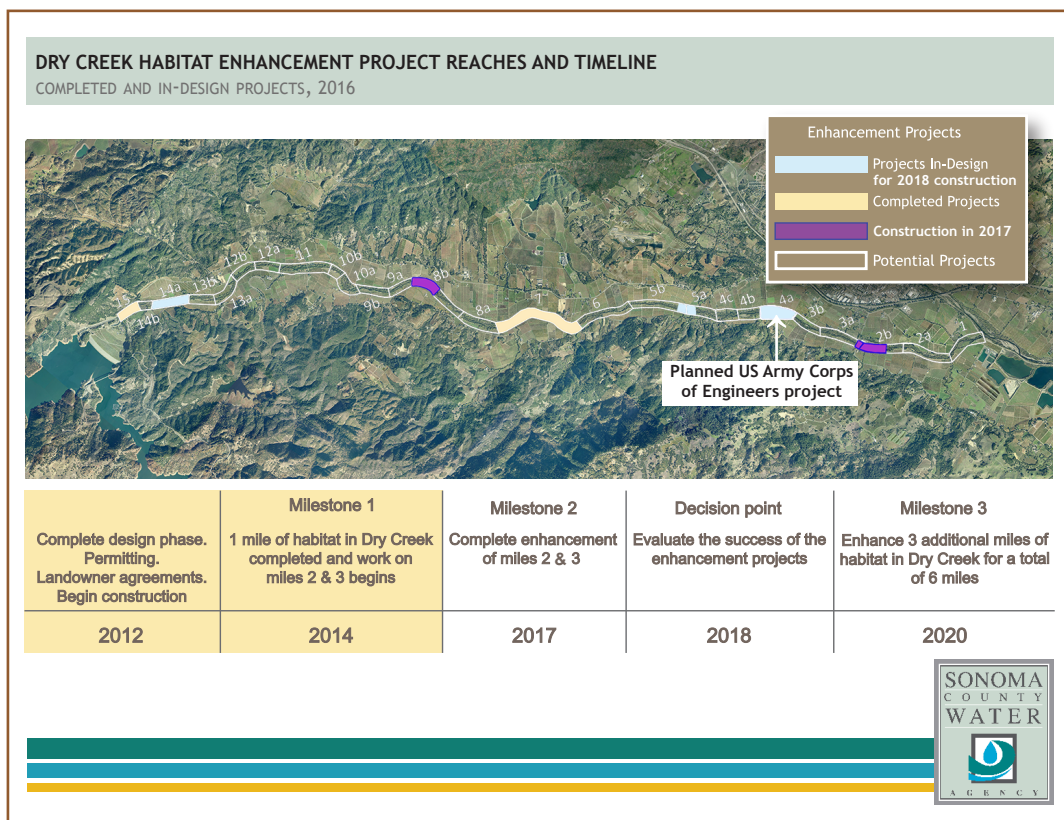
## Environmental Assessment Available for Army Corps Project

Funding and implementation of the Dry Creek Habitat Restoration Project is a joint effort between the Sonoma County Water Agency and US Army Corps of Engineers. To date, most projects have been funded by the Water Agency.

To allow federal spending, the Army Corps has been conducting planning studies in conjunction with the Water Agency and the consultant teams already working in Dry Creek. The studies seek to cost-effectively improve key ecological habitats within Dry Creek.

The first federal planning study called the Continuing Authorities Program (CAP) Ecosystem Restoration Study will be released in late January.

Using engineering plans developed by Water Agency consultants Environmental Science Associates, the Army Corps has elected to pursue construction of a project in a section of Dry Creek between Lambert and Westside Road



*This map shows the habitat enhancement projects along Dry Creek that have been completed, projects that are being designed and projects slated to be built in 2017 and in 2018. Lake Sonoma is at bottom left and the city of Healdsburg at top right behind the legend.*

Bridges (see map). The Water Agency is required to provide 25% of the costs, arrange for access rights across private property, and is responsible for

long-term maintenance of the project.

The Army Corps is required to describe project features to the public through the Nation-

al Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The announcement below describes how you can access and comment on the Army Corps NEPA document.

## Announcement of Environmental Assessment Availability: San Francisco District Planning Branch

The following Environmental Assessment is available for comment and can be viewed at: [http://www.spn.usace.army.mil/Portals/68/docs/Environmental/Dry\\_Creek\\_Sec1135\\_DPR-EA\\_JAN2017.pdf](http://www.spn.usace.army.mil/Portals/68/docs/Environmental/Dry_Creek_Sec1135_DPR-EA_JAN2017.pdf)

A hard copy of this document is also available at the Healdsburg Regional Library, 139 Piper St, Healdsburg, CA 95448.

**PROJECT TITLE:** Dry Creek Ecosystem Restoration Section 1135 Project

**LOCATION:** Northern Sonoma County, California

**COMMENT PERIOD:** January 30, 2017 - February 28, 2017.

Comments must be submitted prior to the close of the comment period. Comments may be mailed to the following address:

**Department of the Army  
Corps of Engineers**

**1455 Market Street, 17th Floor  
San Francisco CA 94103-1398**

**Attention: Environmental Section (CESPN-ET-PA)**

Or e-mailed to [SPNETPA@usace.army.mil](mailto:SPNETPA@usace.army.mil), or submitted to Mrs. Tessa Beach of the San Francisco District at (415) 503-6713. To request a copy of this document, please contact Mrs. Beach.

# Dry Creek Project

## Property Owner Profile

### Stars aligned for project on Truett Hurst and Meyer properties

In many ways, the Truett Hurst Winery property and the property of Jeff and Jennifer Meyer along Dry Creek is the ideal location for the type of habitat enhancement feature that is at the heart of the effort to improve conditions for salmon and steelhead in the Russian River watershed.

A swath of land separates the winery's tasting room and adjacent vineyards on the Meyer property from the main channel of Dry Creek. High water during storms will occasionally inundate the property, preventing it from being plantable. On the other hand, Warm Springs Dam's flood control benefits mute the creek's high winter flows enough to keep it from being beneficial habitat.

"That piece of land was a bare piece of ground with no economic value to us," said Phil Hurst, the CEO of Truett Hurst. "This project makes good use of a piece of ground that was of no use to us."

Based on the design work of Inter-Fluve Inc., the land has been transformed into a series of habitat features that include a large side channel of the creek, riffles, pools, and alcoves that are all designed to improve conditions for endangered coho salmon and threatened steelhead that use Dry Creek for spawning.

"When we first heard about the project, our initial reaction was positive," said Phil. "We were very interested from the get-go."

Members of the Water Agency's project team took Phil and his wife, Sylvia, on a tour of sites that had been constructed elsewhere on Dry creek.

"They showed us some of the sites and they explained in great detail what went into the design and they were very open about the challenges and the opportunities," said Sylvia. "They were



*Phil and Sylvia Hurst believe the habitat enhancement on Dry Creek aligns with their winery's mission to be stewards of the land and protect the environment for future generations.*

willing to work with us and they were very accommodating."

"They worked with us throughout the planning and design of the project," said Phil. At Phil's request, the logs and large root wads are bolted together, rather than attached with cables. "It's a little more pleasing visually," he said.

Visitors to the Truett Hurst tasting room were already accustomed to lounging creekside in chairs and during certain times of the year could witness salmon spawning in the creek. Now, their experience has been expanded and visitors can see the habitat enhancement features that extend for hundreds of yards downstream and extend into the neighboring Meyer property.

"Our customers have been really interested," said Sylvia. "It's been really

fun for them to see the progression. The first reaction is, 'What is it?' When you tell them it's for the salmon, they light up. I have never heard a negative comment. We really want to continue to educate people about the project and the need for it, and not just for our customers, but for the entire community."

Phil believes the habitat enhancement project "is exactly aligned with the mission and philosophy of Truett Hurst, that we are stewards of this place and we want to protect this land and the environment for future generations. We saw an opportunity where we could embrace the idea of improving the habitat of the creek, do something good for us, and be part of something that is going to be long lasting. For those reasons, the stars kind of aligned for us."



# Dry Creek Project

## Project Consultant Profile

### Design team aims for long-term success of habitat project

Members of the team working on the Dry Creek Habitat Enhancement Project collectively held their breath in December of 2016 and again in January of this year when a barrage of rainstorms turned the creek into a swollen torrent of fast-moving water.

The 2016 construction season had ended a few months earlier and they were wondering how the newest set of logs, rootwads and engineered habitat features would hold up through the storms.

Jason White, who led the technical and design work with Environmental Science Associates (ESA), visited the sites they designed along Dry Creek just downstream of the Westside Road Bridge a few days after the high water had receded in December. “We’re pretty excited about how the site performed under the big flood event,” said White, surveying the creek that was now flowing at its normal level. “What is really exciting is coming out here and seeing the site and seeing how everything has held up. The site is definitely doing what we were expecting in terms of performing under a range of flows and in providing target habitats.” A more complete evaluation of the impact of the January storms on the project will be conducted when water levels in the creek allow access to all the sites.

ESA is one of several consulting firms working with the Water Agency to design the habitat enhancement features for the project. The company has extensive experience working on creek, river and wetland habitat enhancements. ESA has worked on the design and construction of dozens of river restoration projects throughout Northern California for more than 15 years.

Other key members of the ESA team for the Dry Creek project include Aaron Fulton, hydrologist/engineer – restoration designer; Ann Borgonovo, vice president, environmental hydrology practice leader – lead engineer; and Jorgen Blomberg, design team director – project manager.



*Jason White, who led the design for habitat enhancements for the firm ESA, explains how the features constructed in 2016 are performing as expected.*

“We look at the river as an evolving system,” said White, a fluvial geomorphologist who has been with ESA for nine years. “We’re interested in working with the river system and pushing it toward a more beneficial condition for the natural physical processes and resilient habitat functions.”

In the case of Dry Creek, that means creating habitat features that will slow the cold, but fast-moving water that flows out of Lake Sonoma (while salmon and steelhead prefer

cold water, young fish don’t thrive when the water moves too quickly). To slow the water, White and his team are designing a total of eight sites in miles 3 & 5 of the project. Under the requirements of the Russian River Biological Opinion, the Water Agency and Corps of Engineers are responsible for enhancing a total of six miles of the 14-mile length of Dry Creek.

On the site that was constructed in 2016, on property owned by the Orsi family and the City of Healdsburg, ESA designed a side channel, that includes pools, riffles, and alcoves that are intended to improve spawning and rearing opportunities for the endangered coho salmon and threatened steelhead that return to Dry Creek.

“My colleagues and I come from a river science background and we take a scientific approach to how rivers function and evolve,” said White. “There is a lot of work being done to make sure this project is going to last and is functioning well for fish. We want to see these sites evolve and continue to improve conditions for fish.”

To date, White and his colleagues are happy with the work at the site. “So far, it has been tremendous,” he said. “The contractor has done a great job. The project definitely meets and exceeds our expectations. It’s amazing when you conceptualize something and then to come out and see it working the way you imagined it would. It blows me away to see how well this is working, and, as it was intended.”

**Sonoma County Water Agency**  
**404 Aviation Blvd.**  
**Santa Rosa, CA 95404**

## **DRY CREEK COMMUNITY MEETING**

The annual Dry Creek Community Meeting will provide an update on the Dry Creek Habitat Enhancement Project.

**WHEN:** Wednesday, Feb. 15, 2017 from 6-8 p.m.

**WHERE:** Milt Brandt Visitors Center at Lake Sonoma, 3333 Skaggs Springs Rd., Geyserville

**WHAT:** Water Agency staff will present information about the status of the project and plans for the next phase of construction in 2017. There will be a question-and-answer period.

## **About the Dry Creek Habitat Enhancement Project**

The Dry Creek Habitat Enhancement Project provides a unique opportunity for the Water Agency and landowners to enhance habitat for endangered fish species in the Russian River watershed while continuing to deliver water to approximately 600,000 customers. The National Marine Fisheries Service and California Department of Fish & Wildlife biologists have determined that excessive water velocities and lack of suitable rearing habitat in Dry Creek threaten the recovery of endangered Coho and Steelhead.

The Habitat Enhancement Project is creating habitat features that provide low-velocity areas for juvenile Coho and Steelhead along six miles of the 14-mile length of Dry Creek, while still allowing the Water Agency to use Dry Creek as a means of moving water downstream for water supply purposes. The first mile of the project, known as the Demonstration Project, was completed in 2014 near Lambert Bridge.

Working with willing landowners, five additional miles of habitat enhancements will be constructed by 2020. The Water Agency and its contractors are currently designing and constructing miles 2 & 3 of the project, and conducting preliminary design for miles 4-6 of habitat enhancements. The continued cooperation of property owners and the support of the community are key to the success of this program.

## **Project Information**

For questions related to the project, contact Barry Dugan at (707) 547-1930 or [barry.dugan@scwa.ca.gov](mailto:barry.dugan@scwa.ca.gov). Information about the Dry Creek Habitat Enhancement Project can be found at [www.sonomacountywater.org/drycreek/](http://www.sonomacountywater.org/drycreek/)

